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MEMBERS OF LOCAL PRESS WHO WILL BE TRAVELLING TO AFGHANISTAN, DRAWING FROM TALKING POINTS BELOW. AS APPROPRIATE. WE WANT TO AVOID GENERATING STORIES FOCUSED PRINCIPALLY ON OUR NEGATIVE ASSESSMENT OF THE WITHDRAWAL OR GIVING UNFRIENDLY REPORTERS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CHARGE A USG ATTEMPT TO MANIPULATE THE NEWS. THEREFORE, POSTS AT THIS TIME SHOULD BRIEF SELECTIVELY ONLY THOSE REPORTERS WHOM YOU TRUST.
--ON JULY 28, GENERAL SECRETARY GORBACHEV ANNOUNCED PLANS TO WITHDRAW SIX SOVIET REGIMENTS -- ONE TANK, THREE AIR DEFENSE AND TWO MOTORIZED RIFLE REGIMENTS-- BY YEAR'S END. A SOVIET PRESS SPOKESMAN HINTED THAT THESE WITHDRAWALS MIGHT BEGIN IN OR ABOUT OCTOBER 5. CONSTRUCTION OF REVIVING STANDS AT SHINDAND AIRBASE AND RECENT EXPEDITIOUS APPROVAL AND ISSUANCE OF ENTRY VISAS

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TO JOURNALISTS TO VISIT KABUL SEEMS TO CONFIRM THAT SOME MOVEMENT OF TROOPS IS IMMINENT.
--IN ANNOUNCING THE SIX REGIMENT WITHDRAWAL, GORBACHEV NOTED IT WAS MEANT TO HASTEN A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT AND SHOULD BE MET WITH A RECIPROCAL STEP IN THE FORM OF

CURTAINMENT OF "OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE".

--ON JULY 30, TWO DAYS AFTER GORBACHEV'S VLADIVOSTOK SPEECH, THE UN-SPONSORED NEGOTIATIONS RESUMED IN GENEVA. THE ROUND ENDED ON AUGUST 8 WITHOUT ANY PROGRESS HAVING BEEN MADE ON THE CENTRAL ISSUE OF A COMPREHENSIVE SOVIET WITHDRAWAL TIMETABLE. NO DATE WAS SET FOR THE RESUMPTION OF THESE TALKS.

--IF GORBACHEV SOUGHT TO HASTEN A POLITICAL SETTLEMENT, THE TABLING OF A SHORT WITHDRAWAL TIMETABLE FOR THE COMPLETE WITHDRAWAL OF SOVIET TROOPS SHOULD HAVE BEEN PRESENTED AT GENEVA. THIS IS WHAT THE UNGA HAS DEMANDED.

--THE PARTIES AT GENEVA HAVE AGREED ON THE ISSUE OF THE CESSATION OF SO-CALLED "OUTSIDE INTERFERENCE". IF THIS TACIT WITHDRAWAL IS MEANT TO SIGNAL A WILLINGNESS TO GET SOVIET TROOPS OUT OF AFGHANISTAN, IT IS WELCOME, BUT THE NEXT STEP SHOULD BE A PROMPT TABLING OF A COMPREHENSIVE TIMETABLE FOR THE EARLY WITHDRAWAL OF ALL SOVIET FORCES.

--THIS TROOP WITHDRAWAL GESTURE APPEARS TO BE MILITARILY INSIGNIFICANT, AND DESIGNED PRIMARILY TO UNDERCUT SUPPORT FOR THE ANNUAL AFGHANISTAN RESOLUTION IN THE UNGA.

--SINCE THE SOVIET INVASION ALMOST SEVEN YEARS AGO, THE SOVIETS HAVE STEADILY UPGRADED THEIR WEAPONRY AND ALTERED THEIR ORDER OF BATTLE TO IMPROVE THEIR COUNTER-INSURGENCY WARFARE CAPABILITY. THEY ARE RELYING INCREASINGLY ON LIGHT AIRBORNE FORCES RATHER THAN HEAVY MOTORIZED

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USING MORE AIR AND ARTILLERY POWER, CONVOY AMBUSHES, AND SMALL UNIT ATTACKS.

---HOW THE SOVIETS INVADDED AFGHANISTAN IN 1979. THE
TROOPS THEY USED WERE LARGELY RESERVE UNITS FROM GENERAL
ASIA, WITH AN ORDER OF BATTLE GENERALLY CORRESPONDING TO
THAT PREVAILING IN THE SOVIET FORCES. THESE UNITS WERE
EQUIPPED FOR CONVENTIONAL MILITARY WARFARE AGAINST MODERN
ARMIES, AND WERE ACCOMPANIED BY ARMOR, AIR DEFENSE,
ARTILLERY, ETC.

*IFIN THE NUMERICAL LIMITS THEY HAVE SET FOR THEMSELVES. TO FIELD A FIGHTING FORCE THAT IS MORE APPROPRIATE TO COUNTER-INSURGENCY. THEY HAVE INCREASED AND MODERNIZED THEIR FLEET OF APC'S, INTRODUCED ADDITIONAL AIRPOWER, INCLUDING THE SU-25, AND INCREASED THE NUMBER OF PERSONNEL BETTER TRAINED IN COUNTERINSURGENCY.

--THE SOVIETS ARE CONTINUING TO REFINED THEIR DEPLOYMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN TO MEET THE NEEDS OF THIS TACTICAL REFOCUS. OVER THE LAST TWO YEARS THERE HAS BEEN A SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN THE NUMBER OF SOVIET SPECIAL PURPOSE FORCES, THE SPETSNAZ. THERE ARE NOW SOME 4000 OF THESE HIGHLY TRAINED TRCOPS IN AFGHANISTAN. PERHAPS DOUBLE THE 1983 LEVEL.

--THE SPETSNAZ REPORTEDLY GET PRIORITY HELICOPTER LIFTS AND HAVE PLENTY OF ARMORED TRANSPORTATION. TWO FACTORS WHICH ARE IMPORTANT FORCE-MULTIPLIERS. THE SOVIETS ALSO

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HAVE MADE SOME IMPROVEMENTS IN MOUNTAIN WARFARE, ALTHOUGH
USSR MEDIA REPORTS STILL ACKNOWLEDGE DEFICIENCIES IN THIS
ARENA, EVEN AFTER SOME SEVEN YEARS OF WAR IN AFGHANISTAN.

--THE WITHDRAWAL OF THE SIX SOVIET REGIMENTS IDENTIFIED BY GORBACHEV MAY BE AN INTEGRAL PART OF THIS CONTINUING SOVIET EFFORT TO RESEAPE ITS AFGHANISTAN EXPEDITIONARY ARMY INTO A MORE EFFECTIVE ANTI-GUERILLA FORCE.

--FOUR OF THE SIX REGIMENTS -- 3 AIR DEFENSE, 1 TANK --
HAVE NOT BEEN ACTIVE IN COMBAT. THE AFGHAN RESISTANCE

CLEARLY HAS NO AIR FORCE; THE SOVIETS' SOLE REMAINING TANK REGIMENT HAS LONG BEEN UNDERSTRENGTH AND ITS TANKS DISPERSED AND LARGELY EMPLOYED IN STATIC DEFENSE ROLES WHERE MORTARS AND MINES WOULD BE MORE APPROPRIATE.

WE WILL STUDY THE AVAILABLE EVIDENCE AS THESE ALLEGED
WITHDRAWALS UNFOLD. OUR PRELIMINARY ASSESSMENT, HOWEVER,
LEADS US TO QUESTION WHETHER THERE WILL BE A NET
REDUCTION IN SOVIET MILITARY CAPABILITIES IN AFGHANISTAN.

--RATHER, THIS HAS THE HALLMARKS OF A PROPAGANDA EXERCISE

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WITHOUT MILITARY SIGNIFICANCE.

-THE SOVIETS ARE USING THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT SIX REGIMENTS WILL BE REMOVED FROM AFGHANISTAN AS THE CENTERPIECE IN A CAMPAIGN AIMED AT OBSCURING THEIR CONTINUED REFUSAL TO PROVIDE A COMPREHENSIVE AND REALISTIC WITHDRAWAL TIMETABLE AT GENEVA. FOR THOSE WHO ARE INTERESTED, WE HAVE TECHNICAL INFORMATION ON THE COMPOSITION OF THE REGIMENTS EXPECTED TO BE WITHDRAWN, INCLUDING LISTS OF EQUIPMENT FOR TYPICAL SOVIET REGIMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN.

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--PARTICULAR UNITS MAY VARY SOMEWHAT, BUT A MOTORIZED-RIFLE REGIMENT, FOR INSTANCE, SHOULD CONSIST LARGELY OF ARMORED-PERSONNEL CARRIERS, USUALLY EMPS. IF, INSTEAD, A REGIMENT IS LARGELY MOUNTED IN TRUCKS OR THE OLDER BTRs, IT MAY INDICATE THE SOVIETS ARE TRYING TO LEAVE THE MILITARILY MORE VALUABLE APCs IN AFGHANISTAN. 3. (C) TECHNICAL INFORMATION ON THE COMPOSITION OF TYPICAL SOVIET REGIMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN IS BEING SENT SEPTFL. POSTS SHOULD DRAW ON MATERIAL AS APPROPRIATE. *AVAIL MINIMIZE CONSIDERED. *HITHEAD

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